

REGULATORY FOCUS BULLETIN

FILE TOPIC: Restraints

Is a reclining chair a restraint? Do you need to have a physician's order?

The federal regulations define a restraint as any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material or equipment attached or adjacent to the resident's body which the resident cannot easily remove, which restricts freedom of movement or access to his or her body. The Interpretive Guidelines at §483.13(a), F221 state, "When coupled with appropriate exercise, therapeutic interventions such as pillows, pads or removable lap trays, are often effective in achieving proper body position, balance and alignment, and preventing contractures without use of restraints." This language indicates that such pillows, pads, lap trays, etc. may not be considered restraints in some cases. Instead, they may be viewed as alternatives to restraints.

If a reclining chair restricts the resident's body so that he or she cannot easily move, and the resident cannot remove the restriction easily, then the reclining chair would be considered a restraint and would require a physician's order. Because of the manner in which the federal regulations define restraint, each resident must be assessed on an individual basis to determine if the device being used meets the federal definition of restraint.

When residents are physically incapable of initiating any voluntary movement and the reclining chair is an alternative to bedrest, the reclining chair is not considered a restraint.